

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 INRE-00 EB-08 AID-05 FBOE-00 A-01 SY-05
DHA-05 CU-04 /074 W
-----043875 041238Z /17

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FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6901
USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL DURBAN IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L JOHANNESBURG 2937

PRETORIA FOR DCM AND PAO

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SF,
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH YMCA BOARD ON READING ROOM

1. CONGEN AND ABPAO MET NOV. 4 WITH NINE MEMBERS OF YMCA
SOWETO BOARD OF DIRECTORS TO DISCUSS APPLICATION FOR NEW BUILDING
IN SOWETO. DIRECTORS AGREED IN PRINCIPLE WITH PLANS AND AGREED
TO APPLY TO THE WEST RAND ADMINISTRATION BOARD (WRAB) FOR AP-
PROVAL. THEIR COURSE OF ACTION WILL BE TO SUBMIT THE PLANS
IN WEEK OR SO AS YMCA PLANS IN THE BELIEF THIS WILL HAVE
GREATER CHANCE OF WINNING APPROVAL. DIRECTORS HAVE NO INTENTION
OF HIDING USG CONNECTION. IF ASKED, THEY WILL SAY USG IS
PROVIDING FUNDS FOR BUILDING. WRAB IS WELL AWARE OF YMCA
CRITICAL NEED FOR SPACE AND HAS BEEN UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO
BREAK LOOSE FUNDS FOR ADDITIONAL SPACE. THERE ARE NUMBER
OF PRECEDENTS -- ANGLO-AMERICAN, FOR EXAMPLE, DONATED BUILDING
TO SOWETO HIGH SCHOOL. THE YMCA WILL HAVE PLANS REDRAWN TO TAKE
OFF USIS LETTERHEAD AND REPLACE IT WITH YMCA LETTERHEAD BEFORE
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SUBMISSION. CONGEN AND ABPAO AGREED TO COURSE OF ACTION AS LONG
AS YMCA GIVES USG WRITTEN ASSURANCE USIS WILL BE TENANT. DIRECTORS
MAY ALSO INITIALLY OBFUSCATE FACT THAT BUILDING INTENDED FOR
LIBRARY, SAYING IT IS TO BE MULTI-PURPOSE FACILITY (TRUE ENOUGH
ANYWAY), SINCE WRAB HAS LIBRARY NEXT DOOR TO YMCA AND COULD
SAY ANOTHER LIBRARY NOT NEEDED.

2. DIRECTORS ARE KEEN TO HAVE BUILDING AND WILL PURSUE APPLICATION TO LIMIT. THEY ARE, HOWEVER, NATURALLY WARY ABOUT THEIR OWN POSITION AND PROVISIONS OF THE LEASE WITH WRAB WHICH STATE THAT THEY MAY NOT MAKE ALTERATIONS TO THE SITE OR BUILDING OR SUB-LEASE WITHOUT PRIOR WRAB APPROVAL. WRAB MAY TERMINATE LEASE FOR ANY VIOLATION WITH YEAR'S NOTICE. DIRECTORS WERE ASSURED USG IS FULLY AWARE IT IS ONLY IN SOWETO THROUGH GOOD AUSPICES OF YMCA AND WE WOULD WISH TO DO NOTHING TO JEOPARDIZE THEIR POSITION. DIRECTORS SAID THEY WERE NOT CONCERNED AT CONNECTION WITH USG IN EVENT OF FUTURE RIOTS. THEY SAID YMCA AND USG IN GOOD STANDING WITH THE COMMUNITY AND READING ROOM SEEN AS VALUABLE SERVICE.

3. COMMENT: DESPITE YMCA COURSE OF APPROACH TO WRAB, SAG WELL AWARE OF USG INTENTIONS. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF POSSIBLE SCENARIOS. WRAB COULD APPROVE PROJECT OUTRIGHT, WHICH SEEMS FANCY GIVEN POLITICAL CLIMATE AND DCM'S RECENT DISCUSSION WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY TO EFFECT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT PROJECT TO APPROVE AT THIS TIME. THERE COULD BE OUTRIGHT NO, GIVEN WRAB'S INCREASING CONCERN AND SURVEILLANCE OVER USIS ACTIVITIES, WITH POSSIBILITY OF WRAB COULD GO FURTHER AND CLOSE DOWN PRESENT READING ROOM. A MORE LIKELY SCENARIO, SUGGESTED BY ONE YMCA DIRECTOR, IS A TACTIC WRAB HAS USED IN THE PAST -- IT WILL SIMPLY DO NOTHING AND STRING US ALONG UNTIL POLITICAL CLIMATE EITHER WORSENS OR IMPROVES.

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4. IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS: (1) A BLACK SECURITY OFFICER VISITED READING ROOM THIS WEEK ASKING QUESTIONS SUGGESTING THAT USIS IS A FRONT FOR SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES IN SOWETO. PARTICULAR MENTION MADE OF MEDUPE, WRITERS GROUP FORMED THIS YEAR WHICH MET REGULARLY AT READING ROOM. THE ORGANIZATION WAS BANNED OCT. 19 AND THREE OF ITS MEMBERS DETAINED. (2) ABPAO HAS LEARNED TWO MEN WHO VISITED READING ROOM CLAIMING TO BE FROM ANGLO-AMERICAN WERE CARRYING GUNS. WHEN TWO MEN BENT DOWN TO EXAMINE BOOKS, BELT HOLSTER GUNS WERE SEEN BY BOTH USIS STAFFERS SOWETO. (3) USIS INFORMED THAT BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION WHICH MEETS REGULARLY AT YMCA IS CONCERNED ABOUT READING ROOM'S "SUBVERSIVE REPUTATION" AND INTENDS TO APPROACH USIS FOR EXPLANATION. (4) MR. J. HAVEMAN (NOT WOOFERMAN AS REPORTED EARLIER TELEGRAM) CHIEF LIBRARIAN FOR SOWETO, SENT LETTER TO READING ROOM DIRECTOR ZUKO TO FILE ASKING THAT A WRAB BLACK LIBRARIAN BE ALLOWED "THE RUN OF" THE READING ROOM. ABPAO HAHN MEETING WITH HAVEMAN NOV. 7 TO FIND OUT WHAT "RUN OF" READING ROOM MEANS.
JOHNSON

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